

Inter-Island Public Health Excellence Collaborative Meeting Minutes



Date: Wednesday, May 13, 2026

Time: 2-4PM

Location: Virtual

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82562814239?jst=2>

Meeting ID: 825 6281 4239

Voting members present:

- Alexa Arieta, Health Agent (Oak Bluffs) - Y
- Marina Lent, Health Agent (Aquinnah) - Y
- Jerico Mele, Human Services Director (Nantucket) - Y
- Anna McCaffrey, Health Agent (Chilmark) - Y
- Sarah Toste, Assistant Health Agent (West Tisbury) - Y
- Brice Boutot, Health Agent (Edgartown) - Y
- Drew Belsky, Health Agent (Tisbury) - Y
- Stewart Young, Selectboard & Board of Health Member (Gosnold) - N

Non-voting members present:

- Betsy Vanlandingham, Case Investigation/Contact Tracing Coordinator, Dukes County
- Bri Yelverton, Fellow, Growing a New Heart
- Caitlyn Winders, Shared Services Coordinator, BME Strategies
- David Sherr, Director, Find the Cause Breast Cancer Foundation
- Dee McBride, Fellow, Growing a New Heart
- Dru Lindgren, Director of Community Engagement, Find the Cause Breast Cancer Foundation
- Fernando Lana, Assistant Health Agent, Edgartown
- Frederick Hehre, Assistant Health
- Jada Haas, Fellow, Growing a New Heart
- Jessica Carter, Fellow, Growing a New Heart
- Lea Hamner, Epidemiologist, Dukes County
- Neftalí Duran, Fellow, Growing a New Heart
- Patrick Roden-Reynolds, Wildlife Biologist & Vector-Borne Disease Epidemiologist, IIPHEC
- Stephanie Barth, Epidemiologist, Visiting Nurses Association of Cape Cod
- Zinc Est, Fellow, Growing a New Heart

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Alexa Arieta called the meeting to order. Marina Lent seconded.

7/8 voting communities present, quorum met.

Attendance Roll Call

Aquinnah: Y

Chilmark: Y

Edgartown: Y

Gosnold: N

Nantucket: Y

Oak Bluffs: Y

Tisbury: Y

West Tisbury: Not present at time of call to order.

The meeting was called to order at 2:07PM.

Administrative

Approval of 4/22/26 IIPHEC Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Jerico Mele motioned to approve the minutes. Marina seconded.

Aquinnah: Y

Chilmark: Y

Edgartown: Y

Gosnold: Not present

Oak Bluffs: Abstain

Nantucket: Y

Tisbury: Y

West Tisbury: Not present

AGS Round Table Expense Approval

Marina motioned to approve the expense. Jerico seconded.

Aquinnah: Y

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Chilmark: Y
Edgartown: Abstain
Gosnold: Not present
Oak Bluffs: Y
Nantucket: Y
Tisbury: Y
West Tisbury: Y

Communications Round-Up

National media interest in the island's experience with alpha-gal syndrome is significantly increasing, with off-island publications seeking to shadow Patrick Roden-Reynolds. CNN recently filmed a story featuring Patrick, local officials, hospital staff, and community members, which is expected to air around Memorial Day. To manage public messaging ahead of this national coverage, the local hospital is leading a cross-sector communications group to coordinate community outreach and update website resources. It was also noted that Nantucket's communications team has initiated a preemptive response.

It was also shared that DPH is currently conducting preparatory work ahead of the World Cup event series hosted in Boston.

FY26 YTD Expenditure Review

The Board discussed utilizing current funds to print public education materials for the upcoming tick season, specifically prioritizing the replenishment of yellow shower cards and the production of newly translated Portuguese versions. The Board also addressed a backlog of 85 open MAVEN cases, which are predominantly related to alpha-gal syndrome. Recognizing the impending expiration of the contact tracing grant, members discussed allocating available funds to compensate staff for the additional hours needed to process these cases, preventing the financial burden from shifting to individual town budgets. Because alpha-gal case management is becoming a regular necessity and differs from standard infectious disease protocols, a local SOP is actively being developed in collaboration with the VNA and Barnstable County. To facilitate clearing the current backlog, a formal proposal will be drafted to document the required hours and ensure proper funding for the case investigation work.

Growing a New Heart & IIPHEC-Specific Needs

The Board discussed strategies for improving public health outreach and health literacy across the island's diverse populations, noting that historical efforts, such as occasionally translating materials for the island's approximately 25% Portuguese-speaking minority, were insufficient without dedicated community liaisons. Members emphasized the need to expand outreach to underrepresented year-round residents, particularly the

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Jamaican community, as well as the often-overlooked summer workforce. The conversation highlighted that true accessibility requires tailoring messaging to various education levels to ensure equity, rather than simply translating text. For example, outreach to the Brazilian community has proven most effective through culturally relevant, highly visual mediums and short, live social media videos instead of traditional print materials. Moving forward, the Board plans to collaboratively review materials for cultural relevance with Growing a New Heart and will apply these respectful communication strategies to an upcoming maternal and child health assessment to ensure accurate community representation.

PFAS Speaker Series Update

The Board heard a presentation on the link between PFAS and breast cancer from the Find the Cure Breast Cancer Foundation. The following is a summary of the Q&A that followed the presentation.

The Board noted the pervasive challenge of PFAS contamination in local groundwater and the broader difficulty of avoiding everyday chemical exposures, especially since the ubiquitous nature of these chemicals makes it nearly impossible to find unexposed control groups for study. The conversation then addressed breast cancer screenings and public misinformation regarding the safety of mammograms. Experts clarified the critical distinction between true prevention and early detection, strongly advocating for continued screening, particularly as younger women increasingly present with aggressive cancers, while acknowledging the need to balance early detection against radiation risks. Lastly, the Board inquired about potential PFAS contamination in all-natural, pesticide-exempt products that bypass standard EPA approval processes. While specific data on these exempt products is currently limited, members expressed concern over the broader lack of independent regulatory testing, noting that in many cases, products are only tested by their own manufacturers.

Kratom Regulation Update

The Board reviewed a draft regulation concerning the local sale of Kratom, deciding to prohibit both natural and synthetically derived forms rather than allowing regulated sales, largely due to a lack of state-level guidance. The discussion then focused heavily on enforcement mechanisms and fine structures. While Massachusetts General Law permits a maximum public health fine of \$1,000 per offense, members noted that any fine exceeding \$300 requires a complex criminal court process. To avoid this, the Board favored implementing a maximum non-criminal fine of \$300 per day to effectively deter illegal storefront sales. Additionally, members debated incorporating broader language to preemptively regulate future novel products and "classes of inebriants" to avoid a perpetual cycle of drafting new regulations. Ultimately, to ensure consistent baseline rules are established across local Boards of Health prior to the summer season, the Board agreed to move forward immediately with the Kratom-specific prohibition and will explore broader, adaptable regulations for future unregulated products at a later date.

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Adjournment

Alexa motioned to adjourn the meeting. Brice seconded.

Aquinnah: Y

Chilmark: Y

Edgartown: Y

Gosnold: Not present

Oak Bluffs: Y

Nantucket: Y

Tisbury: Y

West Tisbury: Not present

The meeting was adjourned at 4:12PM.

Documents Referenced:

- 4.22.26 IIPHEC Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
- 5.13.26 IIPHEC Advisory Board Meeting Agenda
- 5.13.26 IIPHEC Advisory Board Meeting Deck
- FY26 YTD Expenditure Report
- Draft Kratom Regulation